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ABSTRACT

Australia's career guidance system and policies were evaluated. The review team met with policymakers and guidance practitioners in four states and at the national level, conducted site visits to various career guidance providers in the public and private sectors, analyzed data from a national questionnaire, and reviewed pertinent documentation. The evaluation focused on the following areas: career guidance and vocational education/transition programs in schools; tertiary education; services for adults; professional standards; and strategic coordination and leadership. The strengths of the Australian career guidance system included the substantial efforts being made to strengthen the vocational elements within the school curriculum and support young people's initial transition from school; the attention being given to forging pathways and partnerships across the traditional boundaries between education, training, and employment; and the growing recognition of the value of national career education initiatives. Potential weaknesses included the focus on supporting initial transitions at the expense of attention to subsequent transitions and focusing services for adults on remedial activities rather than taking a proactive approach to helping all individuals manage labor market shifts and changes. The following items are appended: a list of review team members; the review visit schedule; and a summary of suggestions and recommendations. (Contains 40 footnotes.) (MN)

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OECD REVIEW OF CAREER GUIDANCE POLICIES

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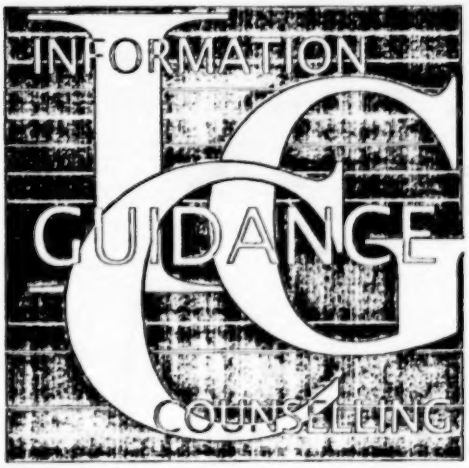

AUSTRALIA

COUNTRY NOTE

Visit: March 2002
Revised: May 2002

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1. INTRODUCTION

1. In the autumn of 2000 the OECD's Education Committee and its Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee endorsed a comparative review of career information, guidance and counselling policies. Participating countries complete a detailed national questionnaire, and after its completion host a short visit by an expert review team. Australia was the fifth country to host such a visit, from 18 to 26 March 2002.[1] The team had meetings with policy-makers and guidance practitioners in four states (New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia) and at national Commonwealth level; it also visited six schools, a university, a Job Network provider, a user-pays career counselling service, a career planning unit within a public-service employer, and a public career information centre.[2]

2. Drawing upon the visit, the draft national questionnaire response and other documentation, this report summarises the impressions of the review team, and its suggestions for ways in which policies for career information, guidance and counselling might be further developed in Australia. After a brief contextual introduction, the report describes the key features of the main parts of the guidance[3] system, including some comments on each. It then offers some general comments on five key topics:

- Career education and VET/transition programmes in schools.
- Tertiary education.
- Services for adults.
- Professional standards.
- Strategic co-ordination and leadership.

2. THE CONTEXT

3. Australia is the sixth largest nation in land area, but has a relatively small population (just over 19 million), many of whom live in the major coastal cities. Foreign-born immigrants form an unusually high

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1 For members of the review team, see Appendix 1.

2 For the review visit programme, see Appendix 2.

3 Here and elsewhere the term 'guidance' is often used generically, as shorthand for 'career information, guidance and counselling services'.

proportion (22.6%) of the population (the EU average is 5.1%).[4] Australia has recently enjoyed a period of sustained economic growth: between 1990 and 2000 its GDP grew on average by 3.9%, as against an OECD average of 2.6%. A high proportion of its workforce is employed in the service sector (in 1999, 73.4% as opposed to an OECD average of 65.2%). As many as 26.2% of jobs are part-time (OECD average 15.3%). The Australian labour market is relatively flexible: for example, legislated employment protection is less extensive than in some other OECD countries. The unemployment rate in 2000 was exactly the same as for OECD as a whole (6.3%); the rate among young people aged 15-24 was 12.3% (OECD average 11.8%). Long-term unemployment is particularly high among Indigenous Australians, in some regional areas (e.g. some traditionally dependent on manufacturing) and among early school-leavers and older workers.[5]

4. Levels of post-compulsory educational participation in Australia have grown rapidly in the last two decades: whereas in 1981 its rate for 17-year-olds was lower than in leading OECD countries, it has since become comparable with such countries.[6] The rise was initially closely linked to the collapse of the youth labour market and the growth of youth unemployment. This led to policy concern that, if the rise was to be sustainable, changes were needed in the structure and curriculum of secondary schools, which were strongly oriented towards preparing young people for university study. Accordingly, much effort has been made in recent years to develop better ways of meeting the needs of the majority of school leavers who do not proceed to university. In particular, steps have been taken to introduce into schools new vocational education and training (VET) pathways.

5. In general, the education and labour market systems are more 'loosely coupled' in Australia than in some other OECD countries. Thus young people's pathways into work tend to be individually constructed rather than institutionally based. The fact that the labour market is relatively open and less dependent on occupationally-linked qualifications means that young people are often able to try out a variety of jobs as part of their career maturation. Because much of the employment of young people is part-time and casual in nature, their early work experiences are often episodic and fragmented.[7]

6. Among the adult population, the proportion with tertiary qualifications is higher than the OECD average, but the proportion with upper-secondary qualifications is lower. The proportion of 25-64-year-olds participating in continuing education and training is also lower (27%, as against an OECD average of 31%).

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4 Except where stated otherwise, these and other figures cited here are taken from standard OECD and Australian government sources.

5 Boston Consulting Group (2001), *Pathways to Work: Preventing and Reducing Long-Term Unemployment.*

6 OECD (1997), *Thematic Review of the Transition from Initial Education to Working Life: Country Note on Australia*, p.5. Paris.

7 Lamb, S. & McKenzie, P. (2001), *Patterns of Success and Failure in the Transition from School to Work in Australia*. LSAY Research Report No.18. Melbourne, Australian Council for Educational Research.

3. THE AUSTRALIAN GUIDANCE SYSTEM

7. Constitutionally, Australia has a federal structure, with major governmental responsibilities being divided between the Commonwealth and the six states and two territories (hereafter referred to collectively as 'states'). The states are responsible for providing schooling. The Commonwealth provides additional funds to the states for schools, and also provides funds to non-government schools. In addition, through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA)[8], the Commonwealth works with the states to identify national standards and priorities. However, each state has its own curriculum authority. In the post-compulsory vocational education and training system, where the states also have constitutional responsibility, there have been stronger moves towards national consistency through the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Ministerial Council[9]. In this sector too, as with schools, the Commonwealth provides additional funding to the states. In the university sector the states have the principal legislative responsibility, including that for accrediting private providers' courses, whilst the Commonwealth has the primary responsibility for funding and policy-making (though as in many other OECD countries the universities have a large measure of autonomy). The provision of employment services is a Commonwealth responsibility; some states choose to offer additional services.

8. These administrative and financial structures largely dictate the structure of the guidance system in Australia. Many of the main guidance services are concentrated in the schools and therefore come under state jurisdiction. There are also services in the vocational education and training system (particularly the technical and further education (TAFE) institutes) and in the universities. Commonwealth employment services have been largely contracted out to private providers. For this and other reasons, there is a larger private sector in the guidance field in Australia than in some other OECD countries.

9. The main co-ordinating mechanism for guidance services in Australia is MCEETYA, which brings together the ministers with education, employment, training and youth affairs portfolios at Commonwealth and state levels. In 1998 its National Careers Taskforce endorsed a set of Principles for Career Education and Advisory Services, which it saw as having 'a key role to play in helping people to become lifelong learners, able to move between work and learning and to adapt to new and challenging situations'.[10] In 1999 MCEETYA endorsed a set of National Goals for Schooling (the Adelaide Declaration) which included the statement that all leavers should 'have employment related skills and an understanding of the work environment, career options and pathways as a foundation for, and positive attitudes towards, vocational education and training, further education, employment and life-long learning'.[11]

10. In recent years, guidance services in Australian schools have become strongly influenced by two key policy issues. The first is the move mentioned in para.4 to promote VET pathways in schools. The second is the increased concern for young people aged 15-19 who have dropped out of full-time education, training or employment, and are drifting in and out of unemployment, labour-market inactivity and

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8. MCEETYA consists of the state, territory, Commonwealth and New Zealand Ministers responsible for education, employment and youth affairs. Papua New Guinea and Norfolk Island have observer status.

9. ANTA is a Commonwealth statutory authority with an industry-led board, established in 1994 to provide a national focus for vocational education and training. The ANTA Ministerial Council consists of Commonwealth, state and territory Ministers responsible for this policy area.

10 Cited in questionnaire response, section 2.1.

11 MCEETYA (1999), *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*, goal 1.5. Melbourne.

marginal work, or are regarded as being at risk of doing so. Guidance staff have often been seen as key resources for initiatives designed to address these issues.

11. There is also a growing recognition of the need for lifelong learning and career development in order to meet the constantly changing needs of the labour market. Closely allied to this is the concern for a fair and inclusive society in which individuals are helped to maintain their employability so that they can be active members of the community and avoid economic dependency. The rhetoric about lifelong learning in a broad sense has not yet, however, been followed by clear strategies, policies and funding. This has restricted the extent to which guidance has been viewed by policy-makers in lifelong terms.

4. THE MAIN SECTORS

4.1 Schools

12. Schooling in Australia is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 15 (16 in Tasmania). Secondary school starts in Year 7 (age 11) or Year 8 (age 12), depending on the state. Most government secondary schools are comprehensive. Around 30% of school pupils are enrolled in Catholic or other non-government schools; these receive substantial government funding, and although they have a large degree of operational autonomy, most are broadly similar to government schools in terms of their structure and curriculum.

13. Subject options are usually offered from Year 9; in post-compulsory senior secondary education (Years 11 and 12) there tends to be a stronger division into a range of specialised tertiary entrance programmes and more vocationally-oriented study programmes, including the new VET pathways. Guidance programmes tend to be significantly concentrated around these key decision points and around exit from school, though there have been moves in some schools to adopt a more developmental approach starting at an earlier age (including some career-related work in primary schools).

14. State policies regarding the structure of guidance services in schools vary considerably and in general are weak. In practice, most decisions related to the provision of these services are taken at the individual school level. With a few exceptions, schools have considerable flexibility in the way they allocate resources and deliver services within the general government funding allocated to them. This is even more the case in non-government schools.

15. The differences between states are particularly evident in two respects. The first is the structure of the key guidance roles within schools. For example:

(a) New South Wales has the most strongly professionalised structure, with formal provision being made for a staffing allocation of a full-time-equivalent careers adviser in each secondary school; these advisers are required to have a teaching qualification and either a postgraduate careers qualification or to have been on a state-organised training course. They are complemented by school counsellors: registered psychologists who usually work across two or three schools, focusing on learning problems and personal welfare issues.

(b) In Queensland, by contrast, these two roles are effectively combined in the form of guidance officers, who cover both career guidance and personal/welfare counselling; they have postgraduate Masters-level qualifications in educational psychology, but their training does not necessarily include any significant attention to career guidance, the ratio of guidance officers to pupils is around 1:1,200[12], and only about a third of their time is spent on careers work.

(c) Victoria has a system of part-time careers advisers: prior to 1998 there was a staffing allocation of 0.8 of a post for this purpose, but since then greater flexibility has been permitted and in practice the proportion now ranges between 0.2 and 0.8.[13] The influential Kirby Report on post-compulsory pathways suggested improvements in guidance provision; it proposed, however, that 'this will not necessarily be provided through an increase in careers and guidance teachers, but will include the implementation of a broader range of options including the use of external agencies and people with guidance experience from industry-based backgrounds'.[14]

(d) In Western Australia, there is no state policy regarding the structure of career guidance provision: schools make their own decisions.

16. The second major difference relates to the structure of career education within the curriculum. Its location in state curriculum frameworks varies:

(a) In some cases, it is located within personal development, health and physical education syllabuses.

(b) In others, it is located within social studies.

(c) In yet others, it is integrated into a number of subjects across the curriculum.

Sometimes it is designed to start in Year 9, sometimes in Year 7, sometimes earlier still. Career education is also included in certificated courses in work education and the like which are taken by some students but not by others.

17. The differences in curriculum structure also affect the provision of work experience. In no state is this mandated: it is largely left to schools to decide whether it should be compulsory or optional and on what basis it should be provided. The most common pattern is for most students to have a one-week work-experience placement for career exploration purposes in Year 10. Students undertaking vocational pathways will then often[15] have a structured work placement related to this pathway in Years 11-12. Schools report that they are currently experiencing difficulties in obtaining affordable insurance cover for such placements. Co-ordinated support for the structured work placements is commonly provided by school-industry partnerships supported by the Commonwealth-funded Enterprise and Career Education

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12 McCowan, C., McKenzie, M., Medford, L. & Smith, N. (2001), Careering in the South Pacific. *Australian Journal of Career Development, 10(3),* p.30.

13 Questionnaire response, section 1.1.

14 Victoria Department of Education, Employment and Training (2000), *Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria: Final Report*, p.134. Melbourne.

15 Around three in five VET in schools programmes involve students spending time in a workplace. Malley, J., Ainley, J. & Robinson, L. (2001), *Witnessing Evolution: a Report on the Growth of Workplace Learning in Australian Schools to 1999*. Melbourne, Australian Council for Educational Research.

Foundation (ECEF) (formerly the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation). For the more exploratory work-experience placements schools generally have to rely on their own resources, and many expect most students to find their own placements: this carries the risk that they will tend to choose options related to their social background and that some will have more options at their disposal than others.

18. A significant current development is the growth of portfolio systems, to enable students to identify the work-related competences they are developing through their various school subjects and other learning experiences and to relate these to their career planning. A particularly well-developed example is the Employment Related Skills Logbook developed by the Department of Education and Training in New South Wales as part of its School to Work Programme (which was initially addressed to 'at risk' students but has now been extended to all); this includes a computer disc to enhance its flexibility, and its introduction has been supported by an extensive staff-development programme.

19. These provisions are usually supported by a variety of other activities, including careers exhibitions, careers visits, university/TAFE open days, guest speakers, information seminars, careers libraries and the like. Opportunities for one-to-one careers interviews seem to vary considerably, depending on the availability within the school of staff with the time and relevant expertise.

20. There is evidence that the growth of VET pathways in schools has had some negative effects on careers programmes.[16] Certainly it has provided opportunities for students to explore a limited number of work areas in great depth; and the level of commitment required has heightened awareness of the importance of effective guidance before entering such courses. But careers staff have often been expected to play significant roles in setting up and supporting the VET courses and the structured work placements incorporated into them[17], and this has reduced the time available for other students and other careers activities. Moreover, it seems that the growth of the structured work placements has in some areas been at the expense of exploratory work-experience placements earlier in the school. This is partly influenced by employers' preference for students who are more mature and more focused in their workplace participation, partly by employer confusion about the relationship between the two, and partly by the fact that – as noted in para.17 – organisational support is available from school-industry partnerships for the one but not the other. Accordingly, preparatory VET for some is tending to squeeze exploratory work experience for all.

21. There is also concern about the lack of accountability in relation to the quality of schools' careers programmes. While the review team saw some excellent programmes during its visits, it was told of other schools where such programmes were limited and of poor quality. In the community consultations conducted by the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, career information and guidance within schools came in for considerable criticism.[18] Key elements of strong programmes appear to include active support from the school principal plus the presence on the school staff of at least one well-respected career guidance specialist with appropriate training and expertise. Where these are not present, there seem to be few levers to ensure that students receive at least some minimal level of service.

22. One recent attempt to address the issue of accountability has been the development by the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (now ECEF) and the Career Education Association of Victoria

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16 See e.g. Victoria Department of Education, Employment and Training (2000), *op. cit.*, p.126.

17 The Career Education Association of Victoria (CEAV) Member Survey 2000 reported 50% of respondents as being responsible for co-ordinating both careers and VET in schools activities (questionnaire response, section 2.4). This pattern appears to be less evident in Queensland, where the broader role of guidance officers (see para.15) seems to have protected them against taking on additional VET roles.

18 Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (2001), *Footprints to the Future*, p.32. Canberra.

of a Career Education Quality Framework. Incentives for schools to use the framework have been provided by adopting it as the reporting basis for a National Innovation in School Careers Programmes Award set up by the Australian Career Service (a joint initiative of the Good Guides Group and the Curriculum Corporation); good practice revealed through the award is then disseminated via the ACS website. Participation in the scheme is however voluntary, and is likely to be undertaken by schools which already have strong programmes. If the framework is to raise standards among weaker schools, stronger incentives are needed to apply it, with some external moderation to assure the rigour of the process.

23. Another effort to improve quality has been the dissemination of an Australian version of *The Real Game*, a Canadian career and lifeskills programme. The development work and the field trials in most states across the country have been co-ordinated by the Commonwealth government, and have demonstrated the value of state-Commonwealth collaboration. The programme appears to have been widely welcomed.

4.2 Transition programmes

24. As noted in para.10, there has been growing policy concern in Australia about young people aged 15-19 who have dropped out of formal learning and work structures or are at risk of doing so. A variety of programmes have been developed to address the needs of this group; some have been extended to cover the transition needs of all young people. All these programmes include some attention to aspects of career guidance, but they differ in the significance they give to it, the approaches they take, and the professional standards they adopt.

25. The Jobs Pathways Programme (JPP) is managed by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). It was piloted in 1995/96 and implemented in the following year. It operates on a regional basis, with funding targeted particularly at regions with high levels of youth unemployment and low levels of school retention to Year 12. JPP providers are awarded time-limited contracts based on competitive tendering. They include private for-profit organisations, private not-for-profit organisations, community organisations, schools and TAFE institutes. Their staff tend to come from a variety of backgrounds, including teaching, youth work and social work; they are unlikely to have had any specific guidance training. They service a number of schools, visiting periodically (perhaps once a week, perhaps every few weeks) to work mainly with at-risk about-to-leave students on an individual or group basis: this is widely viewed as significantly enhancing the guidance programmes of the schools in which they operate (many schools do not meet the eligibility conditions to qualify for their support). In addition, young people who have left school but have not entered a course or full-time job can access JPP; while young people who have been receiving unemployment payments for six months may be referred to JPP providers as part of their 'mutual obligation' requirements. Each participant receives an initial assessment to identify their transition needs and the help they need. This may include mentoring, preparation of resumes, interview preparation, job placement, and advocacy on the young people's behalf. It may also include referral to a professional career counselling workshop offered under the Career Counselling Programme (see para.26 below) and then working with the young person to implement the action plan arising from the workshop. Funding is based on service rather than on outcomes.

26. The Career Counselling Programme is also managed by DEST; its delivery is currently contracted out to CRS Australia (formerly the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service) which in some cases sub-contracts the work to other providers. Established in 1998, the programme is available to young people aged 15-20 who are registered as job-seekers but are not eligible for income support; it is also available to job-seekers of all ages who are receiving activity-tested income support, and return-to-work providers can refer their clients to the programme. Participants have to access the programme through Centrelink (see para.40). They receive professional career counselling in groups and in some cases may receive individual

sessions. The programme is distinctive because it has set strong professional standards for staff: the career counsellors involved must have an appropriate tertiary qualification (preferably at postgraduate level) in career guidance or counselling, must be able to demonstrate at least five years' recent experience in providing career counselling to young people, and must be affiliated to a state or national career counselling organisation.

27. The Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce report *Footprints to the Future* recommended that 'all young people and their families have access to a career and transition support system through and beyond school' and that this should be 'delivered by professionally trained and committed staff with good links both in the school and the community'.[19] To follow up this recommendation, DEST is currently introducing Career and Transition Pilots under which 30 career and transition advisers will work with schools, local communities, young people and their families. These advisers must be 'professionally trained' (the 'profession' is not specified). They will test methodologies for providing enhanced career and transition support for all young people (students and leavers) aged 13-19, including tracking young people for 18 months post-school. They will trial a range of approaches in school and/or off-site. Contracts for the pilots will be awarded following a tendering process: contractors will be expected to demonstrate strong partnerships between schools, employers and community agencies.

28. There are also other national initiatives addressed to helping young people from school. For example, the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) is working with key non-government organisations to set up mentoring projects in communities that do not already have such projects for secondary students and early school-leavers.

29. A number of initiatives are targeted at Indigenous groups. The Commonwealth and states provide funding for the development of programmes such as the Northern Territory's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tertiary Aspiration Programme and the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Career Aspiration Pathways Programme. Around 3.5% of school-age children are of Indigenous descent; some live in isolated communities. Effective strategies need to be grounded in Indigenous culture and to include active involvement of parents and families. There is a need for more Indigenous staff with some guidance training to take part in such programmes.

30. Alongside these various Commonwealth initiatives, some states have been introducing their own initiatives. Particularly noteworthy is the Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) initiative in Victoria, which represents a case-management approach to supporting and then following up leavers in Years 10-12. In 2001 it was addressed to students at risk of not completing their secondary education; by 2003 all students in these years will have a Managed Individual Pathways Plan. The initiative is closely linked to the setting up of Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs), which bring together the various local organisations that are concerned with supporting young people in their transitions from school. In one local project visited by the review team, which was in the process of being incorporated into a LLEN, the work was focused around a broad community-based partnership which met twice a term, plus a small team of transition brokers who worked with a number of local schools, offering support to likely early leavers, tracking them for a period after leaving school, and offering them further support where needed.[20] Some schools are using their MIPs funding to take on such additional staff themselves; others are contracting the work out, often to Jobs Pathways Programme or Job Network providers, or other employment agencies.

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19 Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (2001), *op.cit*, Summary Report, pp.9-10. Canberra.

20 The term used to describe this role in the Kirby Report (from which MIPs and LLENs stemmed) was 'pathways negotiator'; the role was defined as being to 'assist the young person with counselling, provision of advice, links with agencies and access to programs and institutions'. See Victoria Department of Education, Employment and Training (2000), *op. cit.*, p.131.

31. There is a risk that these various overlapping initiatives at both Commonwealth and state level will not be harmonised effectively. Some groups may be over-served and some under-served: 'it's either feast or famine', as one observer told us. Moreover, the fact that most of the initiatives are based on programme funding means that they tend to remain artificially bounded and do not become systemically embedded.

4.3 Technical and further education (TAFE) institutes

32. TAFE is the largest provider of vocational education and training (VET), which is also provided by private registered training organisations (RTOs). Responsibility for the management and delivery of VET resides with state training authorities; while the states provide the majority of funding, the Commonwealth also contributes substantial funding which is distributed through the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). TAFE institutes provide a wide range of training at varied levels, including pre-employment programmes, apprenticeships, retraining and updating programmes, and liberal adult education. Many courses are linked to specific vocational pathways, but large numbers are not. The clientele includes many adults as well as young people; some complete modules of training without any intention of completing a qualification.

33. Most TAFE institutes offer career guidance and employment services to their students as part of their general counselling services. No systematic information seems to be available on the extent and nature of these services. It appears though that the services are largely staffed by professional counsellors, often registered psychologists, who may offer some career counselling alongside personal/welfare counselling. In addition, some TAFE institutes have job placement officers to help students gain access to work-experience placements and jobs, including help with interview techniques and resume writing. There may also be some career education provision in access/equity programmes.

34. In general, however, the level of guidance provision within TAFE seems very limited. It appears if anything to have been reduced in recent years, partly because the guidance services that were once provided through the sector's role in labour-market programmes have declined with the cessation of these programmes[21], partly because of the decentralisation of resource allocation to individual institutes, and partly because of the pressure on TAFE to reduce its costs in order to compete with other training providers. Student outcomes surveys have consistently shown student counselling services and career/job information to receive lower satisfaction ratings from graduates than any other aspects of their TAFE experience.[22] There are signs that some institutes may be beginning to address this issue by seeking to emulate the careers services offered by universities (see Section 4.4 below), particularly as the boundaries between the two sectors become more blurred and institutes start to recognise the competitive edge that a good career service can bring.[23] In Western Australia, the state Department of Training is offering to jointly fund the setting up of a career development service within its TAFE institutes.

35. Individuals who are interested in enrolling in TAFE but are not sure what they want to study may sometimes be able to access career counselling as part of this process. Increasingly, however, it seems that institutes are charging for such services. In New South Wales individuals who are not sure whether they will study in TAFE are entitled to one free visit at which it is determined whether they are likely to be a

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21 Victoria Department of Education, Employment and Training (2000), *op. cit.*, p.127.

22 See e.g. National Council for Vocational Education Research (2001), *Student Outcomes Survey*, p.11. Adelaide.

23 Questionnaire response, section 7.6.

TAFE candidate: if so, they will be offered career counselling; if not, they will be offered information and referred elsewhere (usually to private services) or offered career counselling for a fee.

4.4 Universities

36. As autonomous institutions, each university makes its own decisions about the career guidance it offers to its students. In practice, all public universities have their own careers service, but its role and level of resourcing vary considerably. Some are stand-alone services; some are integrated with personal counselling services. Increasing pressures on university budgets have resulted in many services having their operating budgets reduced. As a result, they are trying to identify more cost-effective forms of service delivery. Many have developed their own websites and are aiming to provide more of their services in electronic form. Some extend their services to users other than their own students on a fee-for-service basis. Postgraduate-level career guidance qualifications are regarded as desirable rather than essential for staff.

37. In at least three universities, credited career management courses have been introduced. Several other universities offer shorter, not-for-credit courses. Another recent curriculum-related development in a number of universities has been the introduction of portfolio systems – parallel in many respects to those being developed in schools (para.18) – under which students are required to record not only what they are learning in content terms, but also the work-related competences they are acquiring through learning it. Support for this process may be offered on a classroom basis, through hard-copy materials, or electronically. Careers services are often significantly involved in developing and implementing such initiatives.

38. A number of centralised services for university careers services are provided by the Graduate Careers Council of Australia. This includes the development of information resources. GCCA also conducts annual graduate destination surveys funded by the Commonwealth government. As well as being useful for guidance purposes, such data are used by some universities in course performance reviews: this tends to enhance the importance attached to the work of the careers service within the institution.

4.5 Job Network services

39. Australia was among the first OECD countries to introduce quasi-market mechanisms into job-broking and related employment services. Much of the former Commonwealth Employment Service was gradually contracted out in the mid/late 1990s, and since 1998 has been provided by a Job Network comprising some 200 organisations spanning the private, public and voluntary sectors. Contracts are awarded on the basis of a tender process; payments are based on outcomes – usually, gaining employment that removes reliance on income support for a specified period. An OECD review noted that 'this radical transformation of employment service delivery is without parallel in OECD countries, and it shows that the delivery of publicly-financed employment services by private and community providers is a viable option'.[24]

40. The first port-of-call for job-seekers is Centrelink, which offers information about education/training and employment assistance, as well as administering a variety of welfare benefits. It then refers those who are eligible to other employment services, including the Job Network, as well as services like the Career Counselling Programme (para.26). It accordingly operates both as a one-stop portal and as a filtering mechanism.

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[24] OECD (2001), *Innovations in Labour Market Policies: the Australian Way*, p.11. Paris.

41. Services contracted to the Job Network include job matching, job-search training, intensive assistance for those experiencing particular difficulties in getting a job, and help for unemployed people to start their own businesses. Intensive-assistance clients are required to complete a Job Search Support Plan, which makes provision for exploring occupational and career options, but the extent and quality of such assistance is left for the provider to determine. Similarly, there is no specification of the qualifications required of staff. So long as providers produce the required outcomes, within the broad parameters set out in their contracts, they are paid their money; how the outcomes are achieved is up to the provider.

42. Some Job Network providers, however, clearly seek to incorporate career guidance in their provision. For example, the Salvation Army – which is much the largest provider within the network – has developed a career-development model which is based on encouraging clients to identify a 'dream job' and then develop a pathway towards it. The notion is that this will give them stronger motivation to maintain their entry-level job, and so increase the chances of achieving the contractual targets, as well as fitting the Salvation Army's core values. It seems likely that some other providers with staff from a career counselling background may similarly adopt a career planning approach. Others, however, patently do not.

43. It seems clear that some clients make active use of their freedom to choose their service provider. The aim is to have at least three providers in each area. Ratings of providers are available on the web to help clients in the choice process.

4.6 The private guidance sector

44. The private sector in the guidance field is strong in Australia. In addition to careers publishers (see Section 4.8 below), it is estimated to include some 250 outplacement agencies and around 600 individuals/organisations offering career counselling to the general public. In general, the market seems to be strongest in the case of outplacement services paid for by employers. Some organisations successfully combine such services with services paid for by individuals. Those working in sole practice report that it is difficult to sustain a viable full-time practice on the basis of the fees they are able to charge.[25]

45. The sector has been given a considerable boost by government policies to contract out public services which are free to the user. Some of these, notably the Career Counselling Programme (para.26), are centrally concerned with career guidance; others, including the Job Network (Section 4.5) and the Jobs Pathways Programme (para.25), may include career guidance elements among a wider range of education/employment-related services. In effect, successive governments have created a new industry in employment services, comprising a variety of providers in the public, private and voluntary sectors, which overlaps with the emerging career guidance industry. Many of these providers have tendered successfully for participation in a number of the government programmes: some specialise in this work; others seek to incorporate it into a wider range of activities.

4.7 Other services for adults

46. The main free career guidance resource that is open to the general public is the 12 Career Information Centres. These used to be part of the Commonwealth Employment Service; they are currently managed by Centrelink (see para.40). They provide walk-in centres in the major conurbations: some are located in Centrelink buildings; others offer direct shopfront access. They also provide some outreach services and answer queries by telephone, mail and e-mail. The centres mainly offer career information, but they also provide some advice based, for example, on use of the JIIG-CAL interest inventory. No

[25] Questionnaire response, section 7.7.

formal qualifications are required of staff: most of their training is on-the-job. The centres' primary target-group is formally defined as being young people, but individuals aged over 25 constitute 60% of the total customers served.

47. Between January and June 2001, the CICs responded to nearly 40,000 enquiries by telephone.[26] There are also other helpline services in the guidance field. In Victoria, for example, Youth Employment Link has a small callcentre with four staff servicing young people aged 15-24, while the state-based TAFE Course Line, also with four staff, took over 47,000 calls in 2001. In Western Australia, a Training Information Centre with nine callcentre staff takes around 45,000 calls per year. Again, the Tertiary Advice and Counselling Service in Queensland offers telephone advice and counselling on a fee-for-service basis.

48. A number of other services have been developed at state level. In Western Australia the Profit from Experience Programme, funded by the state's Department of Training and accessed through community-based Joblinks, supports mature-age people to re-enter the workforce; the Department of Training is currently developing a course in career guidance for all Joblink staff, and is also exploring a number of other guidance-related initiatives, including resources directed at telecentres located in remote communities. In New South Wales the Mature Workers Programme is designed to help those aged over 40 who do not qualify for Job Network assistance: the state's Department of Education and Training makes funds available to contract with community-based organisations (often Job Network providers) to help people find training or jobs, and this may include some career counselling.

49. At Commonwealth level, a new Transition to Work Services programme under the Department of Employment and Work Relations (DEWR) 'Australians Working Together' strategy is being established to help carers (mainly women) and mature-age people to return to work after long absences. Programmes such as the New Opportunities for Women Programme, offered by registered training organisations, provide opportunities for career exploration for women wishing to return to formal learning or work. In addition, the Career Counselling Programme (para.26) is open to some adults, including unemployed individuals aged 50+ and parents/carers returning to work, as well as young people.

50. A sector with considerable potential for offering guidance services is adult and community education (ACE), which plays an important role in the provision of second-chance opportunities for adults. In ACT the Full Steam Ahead programme helps adult learners to focus on what they want in life and encourages them to explore their beliefs and values and to identify and overcome barriers. In Victoria a Careers Project within the Learning Town programme has set up a careers library in eight ACE providers and organised career guidance training for a member of staff from each provider.

51. Some employers offer career-development support for their staff. The review team visited an impressive career-development programme in the Queensland Police Service, which offers career-planning support to all staff, including low-skill staff; this includes access to career planning officers, mentors, workbooks, workshops, and a website containing skill profiles of all the main positions within the organisation.

52. There are also a number of other services. For example, the building and construction industry association, Incolink, offers career advice among a range of other services to workers in the industry who become redundant. Career transition schemes are offered to ballet-dancers and athletes by the Australian Ballet Company and the Australian Institute of Sport.

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[26] Questionnaire response, section 12.1.

53. In general, however, the guidance services available to adults in Australia are patchy and limited. A recent inquiry into issues specific to mature-age workers found that many such workers have never had access to career counselling but are just as much in need of it as young people.[27]

4.8 Information provision

54. Much of the career information in Australia is based on partnerships between government and the private sector. The private-sector Good Guides Group, in particular, has contracts to supply a number of key products, including the *Job Guide* (supported by DEST) which is disseminated to all schools, and the OZJAC computer-based information system (owned by the Curriculum Corporation) which is also widely used in schools.

55. The Commonwealth government has a strong commitment to making information available on-line, partly in order to establish equality of access for people in rural and remote areas. Both the *Job Guide* and OZJAC, for example, are now available in web-based form. A recent DEST decision to reduce the number of printed copies of the *Job Guide* in the light of its web-based availability was, however, widely criticised by schools on account of many students' lack of ready access to the Internet in their schools and homes, and has subsequently been reversed. Some remote areas do not yet have an adequate telecommunications infrastructure.

56. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations has developed a number of publications and web-based resources in the careers field. These include information on education and training courses, on occupational descriptions, on labour-market trends in some 380 occupations (based on Departmental assessments and economic-modelling forecasts), and on job vacancies.

57. There are a number of industry-specific websites which aim to raise awareness and interest in careers in these industries. The Commonwealth-funded Career Information Industry Partnership Programme provides seed-money to encourage specified industries experiencing skill shortages to produce innovative and creative career information materials.

58. Criticisms of current information provision include that it is sometimes inaccurate, that it is too biased towards professional careers, that it is too focused towards young people, that occupational classifications tend to be out-of-date and to omit newer occupations, and that there is a paucity of local information especially in rural and remote areas.

59. A major recent initiative has been the establishment of a National Career Information System (NCIS), which is designed to provide a comprehensive web-based career exploration and information service for all Australians. It represents a significant collaborative venture between the Commonwealth and state governments (previously the states adopted very different approaches to the delivery of career information), plus a variety of other partners. The development costs have been funded by the Commonwealth; recurrent costs will be shared between the Commonwealth and the states. The system contains information on education and training opportunities and on occupations, including regional information on labour-market demand and on wages and salaries (drawn from census data). It also includes

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[27] The inquiry recommended that the government should 'fund a universal, professional careers guidance service, available without fees to young people at school, and to all job seekers on benefits'. It further commented: 'It is appropriate that adults not on benefit should pay for career guidance. A sliding scale of fees could be devised taking into consideration a client's circumstances.' House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations (2000), *Age Counts: an Inquiry into Issues Specific to Mature-Age Workers*, pp.135-137. Canberra, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.

opportunities for users to assess their interests and capabilities and match these to potential occupations. There are sections designed to build the helping capacity of parents and other career 'influencers'. Attention is given to adult career development themes such as life balance and mid-life career change alongside the more familiar focus on employment search. A rationale paper published to accompany the launch of the system locates it in relation to the wider processes of career guidance and career development.[28] Support for the continued development and implementation of NCIS is important, as well as research to track its effectiveness.

5. KEY POLICY ISSUES

5.1 Career education and VET/transition programmes in schools

60. The review team was impressed by the extensive efforts being made in Australia to introduce stronger vocational elements into the school curriculum. There is however some conceptual confusion in this area, and a risk of terms like vocational education, vocational learning and career education being used in a loose way which disguises issues rather than clarifying them. It is important to distinguish two elements of the current changes:

(a) *VET pathways in schools*. This has involved the introduction of industry-specific subjects alongside the traditional academic ones within the senior secondary curriculum, in order to provide learning opportunities that will motivate a wider range of students, but avoiding these becoming cul-de-sacs – in other words, ensuring that they are sufficiently flexible to maintain access to a full range of tertiary education options. It is thus a concept that applies to *some* students, not to all; its implementation is well-advanced and has been supported by substantial 'tagged' funding. Most school-based VET programmes are located in Years 11 and 12, though some start in Year 9. Some include access to school-based 'new apprenticeships'.

(b) *Vocational learning*. This represents the notion that *all* students should have a range of generic work-related learning experiences, both within the school and through work placements and other experience-based opportunities, that will enable them to develop enterprise skills, lifelong learning skills and other work-related competences. It is in principle applicable throughout schooling. There is much development work in this area, though the frameworks for its delivery tend to be looser than in the case of the VET pathways.

61. Both of these initiatives potentially provide *opportunities* for career education: for developing the skills and competences that will enable young people to manage their careers. Moreover, fulfilment of the aspirations underpinning their design *requires* such skills and competences: for example, to enable young people to take active advantage of the flexibility of the VET pathways. But it is possible to implement the initiatives without *delivering* career education, in the sense of:

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[28] McMahon, M. & Tatham, P. (2001), *Career: More Than Just a Job*. Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Canberra.

- Space to reflect as well as to experience.

- Broadening rather than narrowing awareness of opportunities.

- Developing self awareness alongside awareness of the world of work.

- Developing goal-setting and other career management skills.

62. There is indeed concern that, as noted in para.20, the focus on introducing VET pathways may have reduced rather than strengthened the attention given to career education in this broad sense. Moreover, MCEETYA's New Framework for Vocational Education in Schools has now located career education within vocational learning, but has not elaborated it there, instead seeing it alongside career information and career counselling as part of 'student support services'[29]; there is accordingly a risk that it will be subordinated to other aspects of the framework, particularly as the implementation of the full framework is not currently supported – as VET pathways have been – by substantial funding.

63. Certainly initiatives like *The Real Game* (see para.23) have helped to sustain and reinvigorate career education in schools. But the provision of career education programmes is still patchy and diffuse, in some schools is for some students rather than for all, and seems likely to be of more variable quality than most other areas of the curriculum. Particular problems are attached to strategies designed to integrate it into a variety of subjects across the curriculum. While philosophically attractive, such strategies require considerable support and co-ordination if they are to be effective. In general, they provide an enhancement of, rather than a substitute for, custom-built career education provision based on the distinctive principle that (as we were told one group of students had expressed it) 'it's about *me*'.[30]

64. Attention is also needed to ensuring that all students are given experience-based opportunities to broaden their awareness of the options open to them. Without this, there is a danger that the presence of a limited range of highly visible vocational options within the school, with their attendant tools and trappings, will restrict some students' awareness of the fields of work that are accessible for them (the size of schools severely restricts the range of VET pathways they are able to offer). This narrowing could be reinforced by the squeezing of exploratory work-experience placements (para.20) and the limited support for them (para.17). There is a strong case for extending the support for exploratory work-experience placements to a level comparable to that currently provided for structured work placements (para.17). In addition, encouragement is needed for extending the provision of alternative exploratory methods like work shadowing and 'transition teams' (team-based work investigations).

65. Alongside the efforts being made to introduce stronger vocational elements into the curriculum, the review team was also impressed by the steps being taken to help students to manage more effectively their transitions from school. These steps include:

(a) Ensuring that students articulate a plan for their transition from school.

(b) Providing for this plan to be informed by a portfolio of learning and work experiences collated, analysed and reflected upon by students.

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29 MCEETYA (2000), *New Framework for Vocational Education in Schools: Policy Directions*, pp.21 and 24. Canberra.

30 An example cited was that if students were asked to write a career narrative in an careers education lesson, the focus would be on its content, whereas in an English lesson the primary focus would be on how it was expressed.

(c) Developing case-management approaches, supported by mentoring, advocacy and brokering, for young people who are in particular need of help.

(d) Harnessing community resources in support of this process, through local partnerships and through initiatives like the Jobs Pathways Programme (para.25) and the new Careers and Transition Pilots (para.27).

(e) Tracking individuals more systematically for a period of time after leaving school, both for accountability purposes but also to provide continued support if it is needed.

66. Many of these measures have initially been addressed to young people at risk of dropping out of formal learning and work structures, and the review team was impressed by the attention now being given to this group. But it was also impressed by the speed with which such initiatives as the School to Work Programme in New South Wales (para.18) and Managed Individual Pathways in Victoria (para.30) are applying the core elements of the measures to all school students, so extending their benefits and avoiding the danger that they will become 'labelled' and stigmatised. Such systemic approaches provide the best way of avoiding the risks of fragmentation discussed in para.31. Much remains to be done to fully implement these initiatives in a sustainable way, and apply them in other states, but impressive progress is being made.

67. The review team is however concerned that the access to skilled career guidance expertise in support of both career education programmes and these transition programmes is very uneven. Some states and some schools have trained careers advisers, guidance officers or careers co-ordinators able to supply such support; in others, however, there are no staff with the time or specialist training to provide it. In places where such individuals are working alongside transition brokers, mentors and the like on a team basis (the review team saw some impressive examples of such team-working in its visits), students are likely to receive high-quality support; neither group, however, provides a substitute for the other.

68. We accordingly suggest that steps be taken to ensure that all schools in all states have at least one person on their staff who has had specialist training in career education and guidance, who has a substantial amount of time for this role, and who is able to act as a co-ordinating resource for other staff involved in career-related work in and around the school and to set the standards for this work. Training provision for career guidance practitioners will need to be substantially expanded in order to implement this suggestion.

69. We also suggest that there is a need for more accountability in relation to careers programmes in schools. Within the current policy of encouraging self-managed schools, this might be best achieved by:

(a) Developing nationally agreed guidelines for career education and guidance in schools, including a broad statement of entitlement.

(b) Ensuring that there is a clear but flexible policy framework to implement these guidelines at state level, developed and supported by a policy team with appropriate expertise.

(c) Expecting schools to develop their own programmes within this framework.

(d) Providing incentives for schools to use the Career Education Quality Framework (see para.22) to review their programmes, with some external moderation.

(e) Requiring schools to make their programmes transparent and accountable – through school prospectuses, school plans and school reports – to their end-users: students, parents and the wider community.

70. There is also a need for a system of national reporting in this field. To date, state systems have not for example been required by ministers to report on the extent to which they have implemented goal 1.5 of the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling (see para.9). In other priority areas, 'teeth' have been developed through a national benchmarking and measurement approach. Consideration is needed to applying such an approach in relation to careers programmes in schools. In this respect, it is encouraging to note that the workplan for the MCEETYA Taskforce on Transition from School includes the development of nationally agreed guidelines (as suggested in para.69a above) and also an investigation into performance indicators for the effectiveness of career education in schools in terms of outcomes for young people.

5.2 Tertiary education

71. For many young people, of course, the initial transition from school is a transition not to full-time work but to vocational education and training (VET), often delivered in TAFE institutes, or to university. It may be some time before their transition to full-time work is completed. During the intervening period their ideas about their future career may change considerably. The review team heard reports of substantial numbers of drop-outs and course changers both in VET[31] and at university. It also heard concerns about the many students in tertiary education who appear to have little idea of why they are there or where it is leading. More positively, it is clear that considerable efforts are currently being made to engineer coherent pathways across the school, TAFE and university sectors, making it easier for students to move between these sectors and to combine their provision where appropriate. More consideration seems currently, however, to be given to structural articulation than to the processes that will enable students to take full advantage of its potential benefits. If these issues are to be addressed, more attention is needed to supporting students in relating their learning to career possibilities and in continuing to explore such possibilities and develop their career plans.

72. In this connection, there are encouraging efforts in some institutions to develop portfolio systems (para.37). The quality of the processes supporting such systems is though crucial to their effectiveness. Much of the support can be provided by teaching departments, but if the systems are to be related to broad career relevance, such departments need to work closely with careers services.

73. In this respect, it seems that the careers services available in TAFE institutes (Section 4.3) are particularly limited: we have noted (para.34) that their adequacy has received especially low ratings in student surveys. Even in universities (Section 4.4), the careers services' staff-student ratios are low in comparison with similar services in the UK and USA, for example.

74. We accordingly suggest that both in TAFE institutes and in universities a review is needed of how careers services can work more effectively with teaching departments to help students link their learning to their career development, and of the resources they need to perform this role effectively alongside their other tasks.

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31. We recognise that some students complete one or more modules of training which do not constitute a qualification but may nonetheless represent a successful outcome, depending on the student's intentions and motivations. Reports of drop-outs need to distinguish such outcomes from unsuccessful outcomes and career uncertainty.

5.3 Services for adults

75. The review team is concerned that the extensive and at times seemingly exclusive focus on initial transitions to full-time work is not adequate in a world of work in which there is increasing and pervasive change. Some 70% of the Australians who will form the workforce in ten years' time are already in the workforce now; yet some of the occupations that will comprise this workforce do not yet exist, and others will have changed beyond recognition.[32] The review team was struck by the lack of strategic attention to encouraging and supporting individuals in planning their upskilling and in making career moves that not only respond to but take advantage of economic and technological change, thus lubricating such change.

76. The main policy attention at present appears to be on long-term unemployed adults. Even here, the main services are addressed to getting them into a job as quickly as possible without much concern for its longer-term sustainability or potential. While the contracting out of the former Commonwealth Employment Service seems to have led not only to cost savings but also to other benefits, including making it possible for individuals to choose between diverse service providers, there appears to be little encouragement to providers to engage in any career development planning. There are however at least two significant exceptions. One is the Career Counselling Programme set up by DEST alongside the Job Network for unemployed individuals – adults as well as young people (para.26). The other is the adoption by some Job Network providers, notably the Salvation Army, of approaches based on encouraging individuals to articulate longer-term goals and to see a sustained commitment to their entry job as a stepping-stone towards such goals (para.42). We suggest that the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations should monitor, evaluate and explore the wider potential of this approach.

77. In general, however, these kinds of services, even where they exist, are not available to the adult population at large. There are few services available to individuals in jobs, or returning to the labour market. Even the 12 Career Information Centres (para.46) tend to be close to Centrelink, which they feel associates them with the unemployed and may therefore deter some potential users. Apart from the CICs and the services in TAFE institutes and universities, there are some services in the private sector, in employing organisations and in adult and continuing education (Sections 4.6-4.7). But they are thinly spread: for the great majority of adult Australians, the services available are limited and hidden. Yet the evidence of demand is considerable: where openly accessible services exist, they are heavily used; many services take care to limit their publicity for fear of being overrun; some services for young people are regularly approached by adults; and we suspect that much potential demand is untapped.

78. The key policy question is whether tapping and meeting this demand is a public-policy issue or not. Should it be simply left to the market to resolve? Or is there a public interest, as part of seeking a skilled and competitive workforce for a vibrant economy, in making this market work: in ensuring that all individuals are encouraged and supported in making proactive decisions about their learning and work? If there is, then a strategy is needed for career information and guidance not just in relation to initial transitions and 'forced' transitions – which is where guidance provision is largely concentrated at present – but on a lifelong basis.

79. The basis for such a strategy has been laid through the National Career Information System (para.59). This is a major initiative to develop a high-quality system, covering education, training and employment opportunities, for all Australians. The review team was impressed by the way in which the rationale paper prepared for the system locates it in relation to the wider process of career guidance and career development. This reinforces the point made persistently in the course of our visit: that information

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[32] Statement made by Steve McDonald (Australian National Training Authority) at meeting with review team, Brisbane, 22 March 2002.

is necessary but not sufficient. If the information is to have impact, people need access to personal help in finding the information they require, making sense of it, and using it.

80. Some such support can be provided at a distance, through helplines and e-mail. In this respect, we were interested to note a number of small helplines in the guidance field in Australia, with limited resources and restricted remits (see para.47). We suggest that a feasibility study should be conducted to explore the possibility of a major initiative to develop a national Career Line with a single 1800 number, from which calls could be passed to a network of callcentres linked to the CICs, and possibly also to some of the existing callcentres. A helpline of this kind has recently been introduced in New Zealand; in the UK, the Learndirect service responded to 2.4 million calls between its inception in February 1998 and the end of 2000.[33] Such an approach seems even more appropriate to Australia in view of its vast size, making it possible to deliver some equity of service to remote areas.

81. A national Career Line could activate effective use of the NCIS. It could also link those users who want face-to-face help to places where they can find it. What is being suggested is an integrated three-prong strategy:

(a) The National Career Information System.

(b) The new Career Line.

(c) Extending access to face-to-face services, on a cost-effective basis, by quality-assuring existing services and building upon them.

It would be like a three-legged stool, with each leg supporting the others.

82. In relation to the face-to-face services, an important policy issue is to determine the role that might be played by the private sector on a fee-for-service basis. The private sector in the guidance field appears to be larger in Australia than in some other countries involved in the OECD review. It seems however that the only areas where a strong market has developed is where services are paid for either by government (through programmes like the Job Network, the Jobs Pathways Programme, and the Career Counselling Programme) or by employers (notably in the case of outplacement counselling). Services paid for by individuals tend to be accessed by those from high/middle-income groups only, and even here tend to be charged at marginal-cost rather than full-cost levels, which means that they are effectively subsidised by other activities and that the potential for market expansion is limited. This may be a transitional problem, based on the fact that users have been accustomed to such services being free of charge and that it takes time for them to adapt to market provision; or it could be a systemic problem, based on the difficulties of commodifying guidance in the ways a market would require.[34]

83. There are also some potential conflict-of-interest issues in this sector: for example, consultants being paid by a current employer to give counselling to someone being made redundant, and being paid a second fee by a new employer for 'headhunting' the same person.[35] In addition, insurance indemnity issues need to be addressed if the sector is to grow.

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33 Watts, A.G. & Dent, G. (2002), 'Let your fingers do the walking': the use of telephone helplines in career information and guidance. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 30(1), 17-35.

34 Watts, A.G. (2001), The role of information and communication technologies in an integrated career information system. OECD, Paris (mimeo).

35 Gurney, R., Kinnear, P. & Cusack, M. (2000), *Evaluation of the Career Counselling Programme*, p.91. Better Enterprises, Yarralumla, ACT.

84. If private guidance services are to be part of a public strategy, more needs to be known about them. The private sector was the least-well-mapped area in the Australian response to the OECD questionnaire. We accordingly suggest that a survey be conducted of the extent and nature of fee-for-service provision (both for-profit and not-for-profit) in the career guidance field, and of its potential for expansion. We also suggest that the Australian Association of Career Counsellors be encouraged to set clearer and stronger quality standards to govern practice in the private sector as a career guidance professional.[36]

85. Whatever the role of the private sector, a strategy for making face-to-face guidance services available on an inclusive and lifelong basis needs to be more broadly based. Particular attention is needed to four other major sources:

(a) *Employers*. As noted in para.51, some employers have already developed high-quality career-development support for their employees, and others should be encouraged to do so. The impartiality of such support may be constrained somewhat by being tied to organisational as well as individual needs. Nonetheless, we suggest that the Commonwealth government with appropriate partners might explore means of encouraging employers to provide active support to their employees in planning their career development – possibly by awarding a voluntary 'kitemark' to employers who meet agreed standards in this respect.

(b) *TAFE*. Many adults come to TAFE at times when they wish to change the direction of their lives. TAFE tends to assume that they already know which directions they wish to take, whereas this is often not the case. The limited guidance services within TAFE appear in recent years to have been reduced (para.34). But TAFE is a key focal point for public policies relating to lifelong learning. If resources for face-to-face services are to be expanded, TAFE is a natural location for them.

(c) *Adult and community education*. In policy terms, this is a somewhat hidden sector. But for many people who have been failed by the formal education and training system, it is a key access point for them to return to learning. In Victoria some preliminary steps are being taken to set up careers libraries within ACE centres and to provide some short training for staff to develop their potential guidance role (see para.50). We suggest that developments along these lines should be strongly encouraged.

(d) *Career Information Centres*. The CICs are, in some respects, one of the final remnants of the former Commonwealth Employment Service. But they have demonstrated an impressive survival and service-delivery capacity, and now have the potential of becoming significant hubs in a more devolved and broadly-based strategy. We suggest that their role should be reviewed in these terms, and that ways should be explored for separating them more clearly from Centrelink and its associations with welfare dependency.

We suggest in particular that ANTA be encouraged to make some resources available to strengthen community-based guidance resources in TAFE and in adult and community education.

86. We also suggest that a quality-assurance framework should be developed to cover guidance services in these and other institutions. Such a framework could include a code of principles, service delivery standards, and standards for the professional competence of staff. The latter could distinguish clearly between face-to-face support from professional career counsellors and from career development

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[36] Currently, AACC simply requires that those seeking professional membership should hold a tertiary degree in an accredited course and have been currently working in the area of career counselling for at least a year.

facilitators with more limited training. The NCIS website and the Career Line could then indicate to users the range of services that have undertaken to abide by these standards, their nature, where they are located, any fees involved, and how they can be accessed. Co-ordinated marketing could then extend use of all these services, with each acting as a portal to the others.

5.4 Professional standards

87. In professional terms, some aspects of the career guidance field in Australia are very impressive. There are many committed individuals, and there are stronger links between research and practice than in many other countries (exemplified in the *Australian Journal of Career Development*, currently celebrating its tenth anniversary). The links between research and policy are however less evident. We suggest that the ANTA National Research and Evaluation Committee (NREC) should be encouraged to fund a programme of policy-related studies in career guidance (e.g. impact studies). We also suggest that the Commonwealth government should explore the possibility of establishing a clearing-house for research in the career development field, with appropriate links with other clearing-houses in other countries (e.g. ERIC in the USA), which would have responsibility for making relevant research available to practitioners and policy-makers, and for writing regular briefing documents summarising such research in terms that policy-makers can use.

88. The extent of professional training in the guidance field in Australia is widely felt to be inadequate. This point has already been made in relation to schools (para.68), but it applies across the board. At present there are eight postgraduate qualifications in the field of career guidance and counselling, providing around 180 places a year; in addition, two Bachelor of Education courses include electives in career education.[37] This is patently insufficient. Moreover, the professional standards in different sectors conspicuously lack any coherence or consistency. They range from TAFE and Queensland schools, where career counselling is offered by registered psychologists who arguably are over– and/or inappropriately qualified for the task, to other sectors where no qualifications are specified at all. Too often, qualifications from apparently related fields seem to be regarded as proxies for guidance qualifications, without any verification of whether they assure the requisite competences or not. This risks undermining the field's credibility in the eyes of fellow-professionals and the general public.

89. A substantial expansion of training opportunities is needed, within a coherent framework which is flexible enough to embrace but also distinguish the diversity of roles that is emerging. A National Training Framework for Career Counsellors was developed in 1992, outlining the knowledge, understandings, attitudes and skills required by the various professionals involved in offering career guidance and related activities in different sectors. It was never significantly utilised, partly because of the diffuse and splintered nature of professional associations in the field. But with the recent formation of the Career Industry Consortium of Australia (CICA), which brings together all the major associations at both state and national level, there is now a mechanism available to update the framework and implement it. CICA is still at an early stage of development, and currently has limited resources at its disposal. Its boundaries (for example, its relationship with the National Employment Services Association) are not yet fully clear. Its potential, however, is considerable. We welcome the Commonwealth government support being provided for it, which is limited in financial terms but is symbolically significant. We also welcome the inclusion in the workplan of the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce of an intention to 'facilitate professional associations to develop nationally agreed standards for career professionals in all sectors'. CICA provides an ideal instrument for the implementation of this intention.

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[37] Questionnaire response, section 6.6.

5.5 Strategic co-ordination and leadership

90. If there is to be a national strategy in Australia for lifelong access to guidance in support of lifelong learning and sustained employability for all, there is a need for a strategic vision to be articulated, with mechanisms to implement it. A recent review indicated that there have been over 30 significant reports emanating from state or national committees or reviews in the last ten years, each advocating an increase in resources and focus for the careers field, but with little effect.[38] If this pattern is to be broken, leadership is crucial.

91. In this respect, the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce clearly has an important role to play. We welcome the extent to which it is building upon the work of the previous National Careers Taskforce[39], in relation to a number of the initiatives discussed above, and also in relation to the proposal to develop a blueprint (building upon the Canadian/US *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs*) of the career development competences that individuals need to be helped to develop and apply throughout their lives. Such a blueprint could provide a valuable means of identifying outcomes for the work of career guidance services that will help to make such services more accountable to their funders and users.

92. But the remit of the MCEETYA Taskforce is formally limited to the transition from school, and although some of its work goes beyond this, there are probably limits to the extent to which this wider role can be sustained. If a lifelong strategy is to be articulated and activated, a key role needs also to be played by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and by the ANTA Ministerial Council (ANTAMINCO). This could also help to bring on board the employer voice, which is potentially an influential advocate for the importance of career guidance services. The review team was impressed by the breadth of vision expressed by ANTA, and the links it sees not only with business development but also with community development.

93. Alongside the role of government, there could also be a case for an independent Foundation or Council to bring together the interests of the profession and of relevant stakeholder groups and to act as a focal point for strategic thinking and innovation in the field. The government could then support this new body with relevant project funding (e.g. to develop the quality-assurance framework suggested in para.86). It could be argued that the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEF) is in a position to perform this role. Certainly ECEF performs an important operational role in supporting work-experience placements (see para.17) and now wishes to enhance its strategic role. But despite the inclusion of 'career education' in ECEF's title, it has not so far demonstrated its capacity to develop its role much beyond the schools-industry interface. If it is to play a more significant role in the career guidance field on a lifelong basis, it will need to be significantly reconstituted to give it the necessary credibility. Alternatively, a new body might be set up, to which ECEF might be encouraged to contribute.

94. Strategic leadership is needed not only at Commonwealth level but also at state level. The influential report on *Footprints to the Future* referred to the recent decision by MCEETYA to 'encourage all jurisdictions to establish or maintain formal or informal cross-sectoral co-ordination mechanisms covering careers information, education and guidance'.[40] No steps seem to have been taken to implement

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38 McCowan *et al.* (2001), *op. cit.*, p.30.

39 The work of the National Careers Taskforce and of the VET in Schools Taskforce were subsumed into the Transition from School Taskforce in 2001, as part of a general policy to reduce the number of MCEETYA taskforces.

40 Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (2001), *op.cit.*, p.35. Canberra. The actual minute (MCEETYA Meeting, 30-31 March 2000) stated that the Council 'encouraged all jurisdictions to establish or maintain formal or informal coordination mechanisms involving all education sectors, relevant departments, industry and the Commonwealth'.

this recommendation. Our state meetings, however, included some of the partners who might be invited to become involved in such mechanisms, and they articulated a strong wish to develop further the cross-sectoral deliberations that took place in these meetings. We accordingly suggest that steps be taken within each state to put the MCEETYA recommendation into effect. We also suggest that there could be value in encouraging more cross-sectoral sharing of effective practice across states, possibly on a bilateral basis.

6. CONCLUSIONS

95. The *strengths* of the Australian career guidance system include:

(a) The substantial efforts being made to strengthen the vocational elements within the school curriculum and to support young people's initial transitions from school.

(b) The attention being given to forging pathways and partnerships across the traditional boundaries between education, training and employment which will make it easier for individuals to move across these boundaries.

(c) The growing recognition of the value that can be added to state and local efforts through national initiatives like the National Career Information System and the development and dissemination of the Australian version of *The Real Game*.

96. The potential *weaknesses* include:

(a) That the efforts in schools to strengthen the vocational elements within the curriculum and to support young people's transitions may paradoxically lead to neglect of the career education and guidance which is crucial to the success of these efforts.

(b) That the focus on supporting initial transitions from school is at the expense of attending to the need to support subsequent transitions across the lifespan.

(c) That where attention is being given to the guidance needs of adults, the focus is on a remedial approach addressed to the long-term unemployed, rather than on a proactive approach designed to help all individuals to manage the shifts and changes that will enable them to maximise their contribution to a dynamic economy.

(d) That while important pieces of career information and guidance provision in support of lifelong learning are in place, other pieces are missing, and an overall lifelong strategy has not yet been clearly articulated.

97. A strategy for career development in Australia, at both national and state levels, could address three goals for all Australians:

- economic independence;
- social inclusion;
- personal fulfilment.

It would need to be supported by three means:

- community partnerships;
- appropriate quality-assurance mechanisms;
- appropriate tagged funding.

Effectively implemented, it could enable both the community and the economy to reap the benefits that stem from engaged learners and workers, developing their career paths across the lifespan in tune with social needs and economic change.

APPENDIX 1: OECD REVIEW TEAM

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APPENDIX 2: REVIEW VISIT PROGRAMME

Monday 18 March

08.30 Meeting with consultants from Miles Morgan Australia responsible for questionnaire response

09.15 Presentation by representatives of the Western Australia Department of Education and Department of Training

09.45 Seminar on Western Australia issues with representatives of the Association of Independent Schools, the Catholic Education Office, the Centrelink Career Information Centre, the Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Education, the Department of Training, the WA state offices of DEST and DEWR, a Job Network provider, the Ministry of Justice, a TAFE institute and five universities

13.30 Visit to Ocean Reef Senior High School

14.45 Visit to Cyril Jackson Senior Campus

15.45 Visit to West One (online development arm of the WA Department of Training)

16.45 'Sundowner' function hosted by the Career Education Association of Western Australia

Tuesday 19 March

a.m. Fly to Melbourne

13.30 Meeting at Mill Park Secondary College Senior Campus with representatives from the school, the Local Learning and Employment Network, a Managed Individual Pathways initiative, the Melbourne University Access Programme, and the Whittlesea Youth Commitment initiative

16.00 Meeting at Victoria University with career guidance staff from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Victoria University, a Community Partnership Officer, a Learning Pathways Officer, and a New Apprenticeships Centre Manager

19.30 Dinner hosted by the Career Education Association of Victoria

Wednesday 20 March

09.00 Meeting with Victoria policy-makers including representatives of the Departments of Education and Training, Human Services, and State and Regional Development

11.30 Meeting with representatives of national organisations including Career Industry Consortium Australia, the Centrelink Career Information Centres, CRS Australia, the Curriculum Corporation, the Good Guides Group, and the National Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services

14.00 Seminar on Victoria issues with representatives of the Australian Council for Educational Research, the Career Education Association of Victoria, the Catholic Education Office, the Eastern Industry Education Partnership, Employment Plus, the Engineering Skills Training Board, the Food Industry Training Board, KYM Employment, Morrison House, the Peninsula

VET Cluster, the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a TAFE institute, and four schools and colleges

19.30 Dinner with representatives of the Victoria Department of Education and Training

Thursday 21 March

a.m. Fly to Brisbane

10.15 Split visits to (1) Marsden State High School and (2) Queensland Police Service

11.15 Split visits to (1) Employment Plus (Job Network provider) and (2) the Tertiary Advice and Counselling Service (a user-pays career counselling service)

14.00 Seminar on Queensland issues with representatives of the Australian Association of Career Counsellors, Commerce Queensland (Indigenous Employment and Education Officers), Education Queensland, Group Training Australia, the Queensland Association of Student Advisers, Rotary International, Sarina Russo Job Access, WPA Career Media, a TAFE institute, two schools, and two universities

Friday 22 March

07.30 Meeting with Queensland policy-makers, including the Australian National Training Authority, the Association of Independent Schools Queensland, Brisbane Catholic Education, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, a university, a TAFE institute, and the state office of DEST

a.m. Fly to Sydney

14.00 Meeting with New South Wales policy-makers, including the Department of Education and Training, the Association of Independent Schools, the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation, TAFE Educational Services, and the state office of DEST

Monday 25 March

09.00 Visit to Airds High School, Campbelltown

11.00 Visit to Elizabeth Macarthur High School, Narellan

14.00 Seminar on New South Wales issues with representatives of the Department of Education and Training, the Careers Advisers Association of New South Wales, the Catholic Education Commission, the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation, the Federation of Parents and Citizens Association, the NSW Retail Industry Training Advisory Board, and two schools

19.00 Dinner hosted by the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation

Tuesday 26 March

a.m. Fly to Canberra

10.45 Meeting with representatives of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training

12.30 Presentation on the National Career Information System

14.30 Visit to Centrelink Career Information Centre

15.30 Teleconference with representative of the Tasmania Department of Education

p.m. Fly back to Sydney

APPENDIX 3: SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Suggestion/recommendation	See para(s).
Recruit more Indigenous staff with guidance training to take part in programmes targeted at Indigenous groups	29
Support the continued development of the National Career Information System, including research to track its effectiveness	59
Extend the support for exploratory work-experience placements to a level comparable with that currently provided for structured work placements in VET pathways	17 and 64
Extend the provision in schools of alternative exploratory methods like work shadowing and 'transition teams'	64
Ensure that all schools in all states have at least one person on its staff who has specialist training in career education and guidance, with a substantial amount of time for this role	68
Expand training for career guidance practitioners in schools and across the board	68 and 88-89
Develop nationally agreed guidelines for career education in schools, including a broad statement of entitlement; ensure that there is a clear but flexible policy framework to implement these guidelines at state level, developed and supported by a policy team with appropriate expertise; provide incentives for schools to use the Career Education Quality Framework to review their programmes, with some external moderation; and require schools to make their programmes transparent and accountable to their end-users – students, parents and the wider community	22 and 69
Develop a system of national reporting on career education and guidance in schools, building on the planned work on performance indicators	70
In TAFE institutes and in universities, review how careers services can work more effectively with teaching departments to help students link their learning to their career development, and the resources they need to perform this role effectively alongside their other tasks	74
Monitor and evaluate current approaches to including career guidance elements into Job Network provision, and explore the wider potential of this approach	76

Conduct a feasibility study to explore the possibility of a major initiative to develop a national Career Line with a single 1800 number, from which calls could be passed to a network of callcentres linked to the Career Information Centres, and possibly also to some existing callcentres	80
Conduct a survey of the extent and nature of fee-for-service provision (both for-profit and not-for-profit) in the career guidance field, and of its potential for expansion	84
Encourage the Australian Association of Career Counsellors to set clearer and stronger standards for practising in the private sector as a career guidance professional	84
Explore means of encouraging employers to provide active support to their employees in planning their career development – possibly by awarding a voluntary 'kitemark' to employers who meet agreed standards in this respect	85a
Review the role of the Career Information Centres to see them as significant hubs in a more devolved and broadly-based strategy, and explore ways of separating them more clearly from Centrelink and its associations with welfare dependency	85d
Make resources available to strengthen community-based guidance resources in TAFE and in adult and community education	85
Develop a quality-assurance framework to cover adult guidance services	86
Develop a co-ordinated marketing strategy to promote use of the National Career Information System, the proposed helpline, and quality-assured face-to-face services, with each acting as a portal to the others	86
Encourage the ANTA National Research and Evaluation Committee to fund a programme of policy-related studies in career guidance (e.g. impact studies)	87
Explore the possibility of establishing a clearing-house for research in the career development field, with responsibility for making relevant research available to practitioners and policy-makers, and for writing regular briefing documents summarising such research in terms that policy-makers can use	87
Update the National Training Framework for Career Counsellors and use it to review and reform current training provision in the field	89
Support the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce in implementing its planned initiatives, including the development of a blueprint of the career development competences that individuals need to be helped to develop and apply throughout their lives	91
Encourage ANTA and the ANTA Ministerial Council to adopt a stronger leadership role in the career guidance field	92
Explore the possibility of establishing an independent Foundation or Council, or reconstituting the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation, to bring together the interests of the profession and of relevant stakeholder groups and act as a focal point for strategic thinking and innovation in the career guidance field	93

Encourage all states to implement the MCEETYA recommendation to set up cross-sectoral co-ordinating mechanisms in the career guidance field 94

Encourage more cross-sectoral sharing across states, possibly on a bilateral basis 94

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